Government are in the process of reviewing the nuclear policy of the country. Government has also announced that India will observe a voluntary moratorium and refrain from conducting underground nuclear test explosions.

Ratification of CTBT

1718. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item published in the Hindustan Times, dated 18th May, 1998 captioned "CTBT office hopes Indian Tests would prompt more ratifications" soon and give it universal acceptance;

(b) whether the Indian Ambassador to the U.N. met recently CTBT officials in Vienna and explained reasons for conducting the nuclear tests and also out lined India's conditions for acceptance by CTBT; and

(c) if so, Government's latest stand regarding ratification of CTBT keeping in view Article 15 of the treaty which clearly states that no country can sign it with reservations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir. Our Ambassador to Austria, who is also India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Offices based in Vienna, met Wolfgang Hoffman, Director General of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO) and handed over Government's press statements, issued after the nuclear tests at Pokhran.

(c) Government have declared that we would be willing to consider adhering to some of the undertakings of the CTBT Government have also stated that these decisions cannot be taken in a vacuum but would depend upon reciprocal responses.

Illegal migration of Indian Workers

1719. PROF. RAM KAPSE:
SHRIMATI MALTI SHARMA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Malta Boat tragedy of the Greek Coast last year, which claimed over 225 Indian lives has failed to deter the continued migration of Indian workers by illegal means;

(b) if so, what is the number of these migrants and also of those apprehended in the process since the Malta-tragedy; and

(c) the steps taken to effectively prevent such migration?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) 25 persons have so far been charged for their involvement in the Malta boat tragedy. Investigation is continuing. Government continues to receive reports of the presence abroad of Indian immigrants whose residence status is not legal.

(b) As per information available, about 8600 Indian nationals have been found, since the Malta boat tragedy in December, 1996, to be allegedly staying illegally in various countries abroad, almost all of whom have been apprehended.

(c) The following procedural safeguards have been put in place to check such migration;

(i) It is obligatory for all unskilled, semi-skilled and certain categories of skilled workers to get emigration clearance from the Ministry of Labour before proceeding abroad for employment.

(ii) It is a cognizable offence for anyone to advertise in a newspaper, soliciting applications for employment abroad, without quoting the Ministry of Labour's licence number.

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